

7205
57272

INTRODUCTION.

AMONG all the varied productions with which Nature has adorned the face of the earth, none awakens our sympathies, or interests our minds so powerfully as those venerable trees which seem to have stood the silent witnesses of the successive generations of man, to whose destinies so touching a resemblance, alike in their budding, their prime, and their

Hence, in all ages, the earliest dawn of civilization has been marked by a reverence of woods and groves: devotion has fled to their recesses for the performance of her most solemn rites; princes have chosen the embowment of some wide-spreading tree, under which to receive the deputations of their vassals; and the "great ones of the earth;" and angels themselves, it is recorded, have descended to deliver their celestial messages beneath the same verdant canopy; and under the shadow of his own fig-tree, and drink of the fruit of his olive, the reward promised, in Holy Writ, to the righteous man; and the gratification of the sight of a favourite and long-remembered tree, is one enjoyed by the nobleman, who is reminded, as its branches wave over his head, of his forefathers, deriving in his hereditary domains, of the illustrious ancestors by whose labours it has been planted; and the peasant, who, passing it in his way to his daily labour, calls, as he looks on it, the sports of his infancy round its venerable trunk, regards it at once as his chronicle and land-mark.

To preserve the characteristics, and perpetuate the remembrance of the most striking of these objects, in themselves so interesting, is the object of the *SYLVA BRITANNICA*: in the descriptions, therefore, which accompany the plates, will be found, that although the minutiae of botanical definitions are unnecessary, and even misplaced, in a work of so general a nature, the circumstance of local connexion, or traditional interest, has been carefully noted; and gratified, indeed, will the author be, should his performance be the pleasure which he has himself experienced, whilst haunting the woods, intent on delineating those varieties and peculiarities of their nobles, which he has endeavoured to transfer to the following representations, of the spirit of Nature as he could command, and with all the truth, and remark, and faithful imitation may, he hopes, lay claim to, without imputation of undue presumption.